



North Downs Way - Section 12: Canterbury to Shepherdswell

10.6 miles (17km) allow 4 hours

Travel through timeless countryside along the North Downs Way chalk ridge and the ancient Via Francigena pilgrimage route. Explore churches, art and UNESCO World Heritage as you journey in the footsteps of pilgrims.









Canterbury Cathedral

How to get there -

Parking: Station Road West Multi Story Car Park. Canterbury, Castle Road car park.

Train: Nearest stations: Canterbury East and Shepherdswell

Bus: No buses between Canterbury and Shepherdswell

S	Start	Canterbury Cathedral CT2 2HA
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F	Finish	Sheperdswell CT15 7NY
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	Gates	11
	Stiles	0
	Steps	1
	Terrain	Tarmac roads, paths and tracks through fields
	Views	Some far reaching views
	Refreshments	Shops & pubs in Canterbury & Shepherdswell

Route description

1. With your back to the Cathedral turn left onto Burgate to pedestrian crossing. Cross over and proceed to the end of the road, bearing right, and then left onto Longport.
2. Keeping on Longport, go straight passing St. Augustine's Abbey. Bear left at the roundabout, crossing the road, carry on straight until you reach Spring Lane on your right.
3. Follow Spring Lane, bearing right onto Pilgrims Way, follow the path to the left along the fence line with sports fields on your left to the T junction.
4. Cross the road at the rail bridge, turning right to follow Pilgrims Way passing houses on your left until the path narrows. Continue on this surfaced footpath passing industrial buildings on your left before the path opens up through fields. Continue straight across a small road leading to a section of woodland.
5. Follow this straight path to where the lane joins a road at the bottom of the hill. Beware of cars and bicycles as this road is busy. Cross and walk on the right side of the road here for the best visibility.
6. Turn right. At the roundabout keep right and follow the road into Patribourne, following the road to the right and passing St. Mary's church on your right. Follow the road towards cottages on the right.
7. Turn left onto the first footpath on your left after the bend. Continue diagonally across the field towards woodland. Follow the path along the edge of the field, turning left up a moderate incline towards the A2 as you approach the corner of the field.
8. Turn left through a gate as the footpath enters the woods and continue parallel to the road through woodland. Cross a country lane straight ahead and bear left across a field and away from the A2.
9. Follow the path along Barham Downs crossing a number of quiet lanes straight ahead through fields with the A2 on your right, following the hedge row, passing the Sedile Francigena bench until you reach Upper Digges Farm. Follow the path alongside the tree and fence line to a gravel track.
10. Turn left onto a gravel track and take the smaller path along the hedge to your right onto a grassy path.
11. Turn right onto a wider gravel track and follow this until the hedge stops on your left where you see a footpath crossing a field. Turn left and follow this path across a field to a busy road with a gap in the hedge.
12. Cross with care. Cross the road and continue straight ahead. As the track bends to the right keep left passing between houses and the back of the church.
13. St. Margaret of Antioch church will be on your right. When you come to the small road turn left then immediately right following the North Downs Way between cottages. Passing between houses on your right, follow the path to the left into open field with trees on your right. Turn immediately right, keeping the trees to your right follow the field edge until you reach the road.
14. Cross the road and follow footpath opposite. Keep straight through woods until you meet another road with open views ahead of you. Turn right onto the road. Walk briefly along the road.
15. Turn left just before road sign to 'Woolage Village'. Follow this footpath with a field on your left and a playground where another arts installation "After the Black Gold" shelter is Installed. At the end of the hedge turn right and follow the footpath straight to the corner of the field, bear left at the field edge, continuing with the field edge to your right.
16. Before you reach the bottom of the field you climb three steps on your right, turning left onto a road. As the road bends left take the track straight ahead onto Long Lane. Keep on this wide track through woodland until you emerge at a railway bridge.
17. Turn left and cross the railway bridge, crossing immediately right to follow Long Lane. Continue straight downhill passing buildings on your right.
18. Turn right onto a driveway at "Long Lane Stables", passing through a wooden gate and straight onto a grass footpath to the road.
19. Turn right as you exit the paddock and turn right onto Eythorne Road. Cross over East Kent Railway tracks, turn left through a wooden kissing gate and through a small community green space. Pass through a gate onto the gravel road, then proceed straight between houses. Take the gate into a horse paddock up a gentle incline passing through a metal gate. Follow the footpath straight up a slight hill between buildings. Keep ahead. Pass between houses on a gravel trackway on Moon Hill until you reach Mill Lane, turning right at the junction.
20. The Village Green and Church and Pub are to your right where this section finishes.

Points of interest

1. Canterbury Cathedral Christchurch Gate (UNESCO WHS)

The gate is the main focus at the start of your walk. Standing It was constructed between 1504 and 1521. This is the main entrance to Canterbury Cathedral and it forms a physical and symbolic interface between the city and the cathedral as it has done for the last 500 years.

2. St. Augustine's Abbey (UNESCO WHS)

A fascinating place to visit towards the start of your walk. St. Augustine founded the abbey soon after he arrived in Kent in 598. He travelled from Rome on a mission to convert Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Discover the history of the ruined abbey which forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3. St Martins Church (UNESCO WHS)

The third site of the Canterbury World Heritage site (along with the Cathedral and St Augustine's Abbey) St Martin's Church is the oldest in England still in use as a parish church.



Pilgrms entering St Martins churchyard

5. Leaving Canterbury Behind

When you reach this point turn around and look behind you. You will see the top of Canterbury Cathedral and can celebrate completing the first mile of your walk!

6. St. Mary's Church, Patricbourne

This Norman church sits on four Pilgrimages and regularly visits Pilgrims walking The North Downs Way, Via Francigena, Old Way and Royal Saxon Way. The church is known for its architecture particularly its splendid South Door and Wheel Window and for its Swiss Stained Glass.

13. St. Margaret of Antioch, Womenswold

This small church perched on the North Downs is unusual for not having any side aisles. It is part of the Barham Downs collection of churches at include Adisham, Barham, Bishopsbourne, Kingston and Womenswold.



Thatched cottage in Womenswold

16. Rubery Butts/ Three Barrows Down

A scheduled ancient monument, three burial mounds located just off the trail at Long Lane on the approach to Shepherdswell. The site known as Rubery Butts is located at Three Barrows Down. The barrows form parish boundary markers for three parishes: Womenswold, Nonington and Shepherdswell.

19. East Kent Railway Line

The line is a heritage railway line running from Shepherdswell to Eythorne. It was built between 1911 and 1917 to operate trains to the Kent coalfields. There is a cafe at Shepherdswell station, a museum, a woodland area with walks and a miniature railway.

Arts trail installations

Sedile Francigena by Polysemic – Barham Downs (between points 9 and 10)

This bench represents the topography of the entire 2043km of the Via Francigena walking route from Canterbury to Rome. A small reminder of scale and perspective, it is both a place to rest and an invitation to imagine across greater distances.



After the Black Gold by Channel – Woolage Recreation Ground (point 15 on map)

This shelter is inspired by the mining community of the East Kent Coalfield and looks out to Snowdown Colliery and Woolage Village, built in 1912 to house the mining workforce. The structure's materials and concept provide a link to the rich, heritage of coal mining beneath 'the Garden of England'.



